

Report on the 2015
iSchool Inclusion Institute (i3)

University of Pittsburgh
School of Information Sciences

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Program Background

The iSchool Inclusion Institute (i3) is an undergraduate research and leadership development program that prepares students from underrepresented populations for graduate study and careers in the information sciences.

In 2010, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded a \$600,000 grant to support the creation of the i3 program at the School of Information Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh (iSchool). The project was developed in conjunction with Drexel University's College of Information Science and Technology and Pennsylvania State University's College of Information Science and Technology. In addition, the project draws upon and incorporates the significant experiential information and relevant knowledge of a variety of academics and information professionals. Other iSchools contribute to the program as recruiters, teachers, and mentors, participating in select phases of the program and during the yearlong research project. Several iSchools, including the iSchool at Pitt, have also offered scholarship funds to graduate applicants who have successfully completed the i3 program. In 2013, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded the iSchool at Pitt an additional three-year grant of \$819,000 to further develop and expand the program. Total financial support from the Mellon Foundation is approximately \$1.5 million.

Principal Investigators Dean Ronald L. Larsen and Assistant Professor James "Kip" Currier have supervised the growth of the program with the assistance of i3 Project Director, Michael Depew. In 2015, Assistant Professor Rosta Farzan was added to the project as a Co-Principal Investigator to provide additional support and guidance.

Only 25 students from across the country are selected each year to become i3 Scholars. Since the program's inception, the iSchool at Pitt has hosted 110 students in five cohorts from 2011 to 2015. i3 Scholars have represent a diverse array of disciplinary backgrounds, including: information science, computer science, engineering, history, political science, statistics, mathematics, English, communications, business, public health, biology, and chemistry. i3 Scholars undertake a yearlong experience that includes two summer institutes hosted by Pitt and a research project spanning the full academic year. The i3 program also serves as a pipeline for i3 Scholars into internationally recognized iSchools.

2015 Institutes

On May 20, 2015, the School of Information Sciences was honored to receive the 2015 Chancellor's Affirmative Action Award for its work in developing the iSchool Inclusion Institute. "This award is given to a department or program that has made a significant impact on the University's efforts to expand diversity," Chancellor Patrick Gallagher told the council, "In making its decision, the selection committee cited the i3 program as an important tool in ensuring that undergraduate students from underrepresented groups will have the exposure to experiences that encourage them to pursue graduate studies in fields that have historically lacked diversity." (Source: <http://www.utimes.pitt.edu/?p=36053>)

On June 14, the 2015 cohort of i3 Scholars arrived to the University of Pittsburgh to begin the program. The 2015 cohort was the largest in i3 history and remains academically diverse, including majors in fields such as biomedical engineering, history, studio art, computer engineering, and chemistry among others.

2015 Cohort Highlights

- 26 students; 17 women and 9 men
- 16 U.S. States represented
- Average GPA: 3.25
- Majors: Computer Science, Information Science, IT & Informatics, Psychology, Sociology, Communication, Political Science, History, Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Industrial & Systems Engineering, Marketing, Chemistry, Studio Art, French, Music
- Technical skills
 - Python, Java, HTML, MATLAB, SQL, C, C++, C#, XML, CSS, PHP, SPSS, Photoshop, Solidworks, Wordpress, Sharepoint, jQuery, Arduino and more
- Extracurricular activities
 - Research and internships in industry and academia
 - Members of various clubs, multicultural organizations, Greek organizations and honor societies
 - Volunteers at churches/ministries, food banks, and other charitable organizations
 - Athletes – soccer, field hockey, basketball, track & field
 - Artists, photographers, musicians

In addition to the 2015 cohort, the iSchool at Pitt welcomed back the 2014 i3 Scholars for their two-week Concluding Institute. The Concluding Institute serves as a capstone for students after completing their yearlong, team research project. 6 projects were completed by teams from the 2014 cohort. Projects investigated feature and content analysis in Amazon product reviews, media coverage of the Sony security hack, mobile applications used by adults with autism, reproductive rights and social media usage in relation to legislation at the state level, indoor wayfinding for people with mobility impairments, and the interoperability of sex offender databases. The 2014 i3 Scholars will be submitting their work to iConference and other conferences for publication in 2016.

Curriculum Highlights

Exploring the Information Sciences

i3 encourages students from underrepresented populations to consider careers in the information sciences by offering numerous special-topics workshops and seminars, led by professionals from across the country. 2015 workshops focused on a range of topics, including: copyright and fair use of digital information, information organization, information needs of diverse people, healthcare informatics, security, social computing, spatial information processing, simulation and games, project management, big data, and information systems.

2015 Speakers & Lecturers

- Fay Cobb Payton, Associate Professor of Information Systems/Technology at NC State University (*Keynote speaker at the 2015 Opening Ceremony*)
- Nicki Washington, Associate Professor in the Department of Systems and Computer Science at Howard University (*Speaker at the 2015 Graduation and Recognition Ceremony*)
- Robert Glushko, Professor at UC Berkeley in the School of Information
- James ‘Kip’ Currier, Co-PI at i3 and Assistant Professor at the iSchool at University of Pittsburgh
- Rosta Farzan, Co-PI at i3 and Assistant Professor at the iSchool at University of Pittsburgh
- Jeria Quesenberry, Associate Teaching Professor in the Information Systems Program at Carnegie Mellon University
- Randy Weinberg, Teaching Professor and Faculty Director - Information Systems Program at Carnegie Mellon University
- Connie Pascal, PhD student at Rutgers School of Communication and Information
- Martez Mott, PhD student at University of Washington Information School
- Dmitriy Babichenko, PhD student and Professor of Practice at the iSchool at the University of Pittsburgh
- Leona Mitchell, Visiting Professor of Practice at the iSchool at University of Pittsburgh
- Wes Lipschultz, Manager of Student Services at the iSchool at University of Pittsburgh
- Shabana Reza, Enrollment Manager at the iSchool at University of Pittsburgh

Professional Development

In addition to exposing i3 Scholars to the many research and career areas in the information sciences, the program includes many professional development components. i3 Scholars take part in resume and cover letter workshops, mock interviews, networking luncheons, GRE seminars, goal-setting meetings, and multiple writing exercises during their four weeks at the University of Pittsburgh. i3 serves as an opportunity for students to spend four intensive weeks learning, reflecting, and building critical skills.

Advising and Mentoring

i3 expanded its curriculum in 2015 to include a formal academic advising and mentoring structure. i3 Scholars took part in individual and group advising sessions, in which they were required to set specific, measurable professional and personal goals to accomplish during and

after the program. Advisors provided feedback and will serve as resources for additional help over the next year as students complete their yearlong projects.

Teaching Modules

2015 was the second year in which i3 hosted PhD Teaching Fellows. 4 Teaching Fellows were selected from a national search to co-teach two-week modules on research design and programming.

- Daniel Carter – PhD student, University of Texas-Austin, School of Information Studies
- Corey Jackson – PhD student, Syracuse University, School of Information
- Rose Paquet Kinsley – PhD student, University of Washington, Information School
- Philip Reed – PhD student, University of Washington, Information School

Social Development and Networking

i3 Scholars also had the opportunity to participate in social activities in Pittsburgh. Social activities remain a critical component of i3, allowing students to bond and strengthen their relationships. 2015 social activities included:

- Visits to the Carnegie Museum of Art, Carnegie Museum of Natural History and the Andy Warhol Museum
- Team-building adventure course and ziplining at Go Ape! North Park – Pittsburgh
- An off-site workshop on innovation and performance in the city of Pittsburgh at the Office of the Mayor with Chief Innovation & Performance Officer, Debra Lam
- Kayaking on the Allegheny River with Venture Outdoors
- Visit to the Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium



2015 i3 Cohort















